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Arkansas counties turn to technology to combat Meth production
MethCheck™ offers real-time solution to growing PSE problem

Louisville, Ky. — Three Arkansas counties have joined forces to put Meth labs out of business by cracking down on the excessive purchase of pseudoephedrine (PSE), the key precursor ingredient in the production of Methamphetamine. Sheriffs' departments and pharmacies in Cross, Poinsett, and Craighead counties are using an innovative web-based application called MethCheck, created by Appriss Inc.

MethCheck replaces manual log books with a single nationwide electronic database and allows pharmacies to submit purchase transactions to law enforcement agencies. This technology gives investigators the tools to identify a shopper who moves from store to store, or even state to state, to avoid suspicion — a technique commonly known as “smurfing.”

MethCheck is the most widely used electronic log solution in the market, with more than 6,000 pharmacies in 43 states currently in the implementation process. In addition to Arkansas, law enforcement agencies and pharmacies in Kentucky, Oklahoma, and West Virginia are using MethCheck. With 23 bills in 15 states calling for tightening PSE laws or requiring electronic monitoring, a number of other states are expected to move on the application in 2007.

Laws regulating the purchase of PSE differ from state to state, creating a compliance challenge for pharmacies and other retailers operating throughout the country. In addition, pharmacies must comply with the Combat Meth Epidemic Act of 2005 (CMEA), which limits the purchase of medicines containing PSE to 9 grams per 30-day period or 3.6 grams in a single day. The CMEA also requires that tablets containing PSE must be kept in a secure location. Purchasers are required to provide photo identification as well as their name, address, date of birth, and signature to obtain the tablets.

The aggressive approach to busting Meth labs is critical because the highly addictive drug hooks users after just a few uses. Also, Meth labs are toxic to the environment and dangerous because of the volatility and flammability of many of the key ingredients. In addition, Meth is commonly associated with identity theft, assault, child abuse, sex crimes, and domestic violence due to the effects on its users.

MethCheck helps pharmacies comply with state and Federal law while at the same time allowing law enforcement officers to identify suspicious buying patterns and individuals who exceed the legal purchase limits for PSE. “MethCheck gives us a more efficient surveillance tool for locating people who are cooking and selling Meth. The pharmacies also like the system, because it eases the burden of paper registries,” said Cross County, Arkansas Sheriff Ronnie Baldwin. “This is truly a nationwide solution, and it’s the only way to tackle the Meth problem because these offenders rarely respect county or state borders.”

The system has already proven successful in shutting down Meth labs. In November 2005, the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy began piloting use of MethCheck at 15 pharmacies in Laurel County through the Operation UNITE (Unlawful Narcotics Investigations Treatment and Education) Drug Task Force in Eastern Kentucky. In the year since the pilot began, Operation UNITE has charged 22 people who purchased more than the legal limit of PSE. Of these, 16 were charged with manufacturing methamphetamine. The program has also helped locate purchases made by 26 people involved in a methamphetamine manufacturing conspiracy case.

“I use MethCheck on a daily basis to run suspicious buyer reports and purchase limit reports,” said Officer Brian Lewis. “Prior to using this system I would spend almost a full day traveling to all the participating pharmacies and making copies of manual logs before returning to my office to look at the data. A process that took two days now takes only a couple of minutes.”

Staff from participating pharmacies also said they found MethCheck to be far quicker, simpler, and more accurate than the manual log they were maintaining prior to using MethCheck.

“Cross, Poinsett, and Craighead counties in Arkansas are part of a pioneering effort, where some of the first Meth labs in the nation will be busted based on data from

MethCheck,” said Mike Davis, president of Appriss. “We’re excited about partnering with law enforcement officials and pharmacies in these communities to make a significant contribution to the health and safety of local residents.”

About Appriss

Since 1994, Appriss has provided innovative technology solutions that help hundreds of local, state, and Federal government agencies serve and protect their citizens. Our flagship product, VINE®, the National Victim Notification Network, serves more than 2,100 communities in 41 states. In addition to VINE, Appriss partners with AT&T Government Solutions Inc. to provide automated notification services to victims of Federal crimes through the U.S. Department of Justice.

Other innovative products offered by Appriss include JusticeXchange®, the nation’s leading solution for connecting criminal justice agencies; VINE Protective Order™, which alerts individuals when a protective order has been served; and AlertXpress™, a high speed notification service for government agencies.

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